

**Testimony of
William H. Merring, III
Vice President, Systems Engineering Division
PEC Solutions, Inc.
Before the United States House of Representatives
Appropriations Subcommittee on Homeland Security**

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Mr. Chairman, members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today on behalf of PEC Solutions, Inc. My name is William Merring, and I am Vice President in charge of the PEC Solutions Systems Engineering Division. As a subcontractor to NCS/Pearson in its effort to recruit, assess, and hire the nationwide airport screener workforce, PEC, through my division, was responsible for the collection of electronic fingerprints and their transmission to the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) . I am very proud of our performance and the high benchmark we set for technological innovation, timeliness, and quality -- our fingerprint submissions had a “classifiable”, or usable, rate of more than 99%.

PEC Solutions provides professional high-end technology services that enable government entities to harness the power of the Internet and other advanced technologies to enhance productivity and improve services to the public. Our clients include the Department of Justice; the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms; the Drug Enforcement Administration the Internal Revenue Service; the Veterans Benefits Administration; segments of the intelligence community, and various state and local governments. We also value our relationship with the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) and believe our contribution has been essential to TSA’s progress as well as meeting the public safety challenges facing our nation’s airports.

Fingerprint Collection

PEC Solutions played a very narrow role in the hiring of airport screeners, focusing entirely on fingerprint collection and submission. While we made recommendations with respect to technology deployment and staffing levels, we took

direction and responded to requirements from our prime contractor, NCS/Pearson. Pursuant to our contract with NCS/Pearson, PEC Solutions: (1) developed and delivered state-of-the-art biometric workstations to collect fingerprints electronically and screen the fingerprints for quality; (2) provided staff to assist in the collection of fingerprints and biographical information at assessment centers; (3) centrally accumulated and forwarded the fingerprints and associated information to OPM, based upon lists provided by NCS/Pearson; and (4) from those lists, created badges for issuance by TSA Security personnel.

As one might expect, the process and requirements for collecting fingerprints evolved over the first three months of the contract. For example, NCS/Pearson originally envisioned collecting rolled ink fingerprints. Because such prints inherently have a higher unclassifiable rate, are more difficult to process requiring more labor, and as a result, have the potential to take much longer to process than electronic prints, we strongly recommended and received approval for an entirely electronic system. Similarly, NCS/Pearson originally anticipated fixed assessment centers with fixed biometric workstations. However, in order to increase the number of applicants to meet the Congressionally-mandated deadlines, temporary centers were established around the country, generally for a week at a time and often concurrently. Thus, PEC was required to develop mobile technology for the collection and encrypted broadband transmission of fingerprint data.

The fingerprint collection process worked as follows:

- PEC would receive direction from NCS/Pearson regarding the establishment of an assessment center, often less than forty-eight hours before applicant screening was to begin. PEC would then ship the biometric workstations and ensure that the equipment arrived intact and in a functional state, and set up the center's fingerprinting section.

- Under direction from NCS/Pearson, PEC personnel would collect electronic fingerprints for those individuals designated by NCS/Pearson's assessment center management. This effort included gathering sufficient data to complete the information requirements for the SF-87 Fingerprint form as well as taking photographs of the applicants. As electronic fingerprints were captured, the software contained within the biometric systems would perform a first-level quality check on the fingerprints. This check increased the quality of our submissions by allowing us to immediately correct obvious errors and re-fingerprint, if required, while the applicant was still available.
- Next, the resulting files were transmitted in near real-time, but no less than daily, to our processing center in Fairfax, Virginia for additional quality checks and secure storage prior to forwarding to OPM. All information obtained was maintained in a closed network and securely transmitted via encrypted VPN (DES3).
- NCS/Pearson would then provide PEC with what was designated an "acceptance" list that contained the names of individuals whose files we were to send to OPM. When so directed, PEC would transmit the selected electronic fingerprint files with their associated biographic information to OPM via a secure link. Additionally, PEC would send the photographs of the people on this list to TSA, where PEC personnel would create badges and deliver them to TSA security personnel.

Contract Performance

Over the course of our contract with NCS/Pearson, PEC Solutions staffed 157 assessment centers, serving an estimated 316 airports. We collected over 180,000 fingerprints and, as directed by NCS/Pearson, transmitted 115,331 fingerprint files to OPM (see attachment).

The “classifiable rate” for our fingerprint submissions exceeded industry

Month	# Fingerprints Captured (duplicates included)	# Fingerprints Submitted to OPM (duplicates included)
Mar-02	1482	0
Apr-02	915	423
May-02	1910	859
Jun-02	1543	214
Jul-02	18215	988
Aug-02	45833	22246
Sep-02	69237	26342
Oct-02	33805	37229
Nov-02	7034	9201
Dec-02	86	7218
Jan-03		2625
Feb-03		236
Mar-03		7410
Apr-03		100
May-03		240
Total	180060	115331

standards. Classifiable fingerprints are fingerprints that can be used for searches in the FBI’s IAFIS. While the industry standard is approximately 97% classifiable, PEC’s state-of-the-art technology – similar to that used by the Department of Justice – and multiple quality checks, resulted in a classifiable rate of 99.73%. PEC is proud of its participation in this program and of its contribution to TSA’s mission.

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Thank you again for this opportunity to testify, and I look forward to answering your questions.

Fingerprints Captured and Forwarded by PEC Solutions, Inc

Total Unclassifiable Rate	0.27%
Total # Airports Serviced (estimate)	316
Total # Sites Visited	157
Total # Deployments (estimate)	167